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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this curriculum is to increase the skills and self confidence of 20 to 30 parents who reside in "economically disadvantaged" school districts to the extent that they will become more active in seeking improvements in the 1965 Elementary Secondary Education Act Title I and other compensatory education programs in their school and school district. The emphasis of the curriculum is to provide a setting where parents can assimilate the necessary background information about Title I and related programs. Of equal or even greater importance will be the processes of analysis, synthesis, and problem solving. Activities that improve self-concept are also very important. Learning activities and settings will, therefore, be provided to involve the participants in comparing, analyzing, and developing solutions to real problems. At least 20 parents who have children in a Title I, E.S.E.A. program will be recruited. Five will be on the Title I Council to participate in the training program in the selected school district(s). Workshops will be organized and publicized. The workshop program will be organized in six modules. The training modules can be used in any school district where parents request them.
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A CURRICULM TO ASSIST PARENTS TO BECOME ADVOCATES FOR IMPROVED TITLE I, ESEA PROGRAMS AND OTHER RELATED PROGRAMS

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Introduction

Federal compensatory education programs since the late 1960's have encouraged, and in some cases, required local school districts to involve in the programs the parents of the children receiving the services. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the largest compensatory education program, in October, 1971, mandated the formation of Title I parent advisory councils and other forms of parental involvement in recipient school districts. This requirement stemmed from a growing concern that the success of compensatory education may depend to some degree on the involvement of the parents of the disadvantaged children in the activities and operation of the program.[1] The involvement of low income and minority groups in decision-making is one of the recommended methods of attaining accountability and relevancy of curriculum.[2] Parents ensure that federal funds are used wisely, and offer cultural backgrounds which can improve the diversification of methods and materials.[3] Learning through parents preserves the integrity of the home.[4]

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[1]National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children, Fourth Annual Report, Title I-ESEA: A Review and A Forward Look - 1969, O. Meredith Wilson, chairman (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 23.

[2]Research and Policy Committee, A Statement of the Committee, Education for the Urban Disadvantaged: From Pre-School to Employment (New York: Committee for Economic Development, 1971), p. 15.

[3]National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children, 1971 Annual Report to the President and the Congress, Title I, ESEA -- The Weakest Link: The Children of the Poor, Herman R. Goldberg, Chairman (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 23-24.

[4]David P. Weikart, "Learning Through Parents: Lessons for Teachers", Childhood Education, XLVIII (December, 1971), pp. 135-137.

The October mandate affected three-fourths of the school districts in the United States and all ninety-three school districts in South Carolina. Since 1965, South Carolina school districts have annually received approximately $32 million from Title I, ESEA, to assist more than 200,000 educationally deprived children. Title I provides "financial assistance. . .to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs. . .which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children" (Section 101, Public Law 89-10, as amended).

Local school districts were encouraged to involve parents in Title I projects when Office of Education Program Guide No. 44 was issued in March, 1968. Later that year, the Office of Education recommended that local Title I advisory committees be established.[5] Few school districts followed the recommendation and apparently this also was a factor in the writing of the October, 1971, regulation. This mandate requires each school district which receives Title I funds to form a representative parent council in which the parents who have children eligible to be in the program are in the majority. The parent council must be involved in the planning, development, operation, and evaluation of the Title I project.[6]

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[5]United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Parent Involvement in Title I ESEA: Why? What? How? (Washington, D. C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 3-4.

[6]Ibid.

Although the recommendations and requirement call for low-come parent participation, few school districts have been successful in securing this participation. The writer has heard school administrators contend that the parents are not interested in actively participating and do not attend meetings. On the other hand, the present writer has heard complaints from parents on parent councils in South Carolina, as well as other states, which indicate that many of them are not given sufficient information about the projects to intelligently offer suggestions or complaints. For this reason, some parents stop attending meetings. In a discussion of school and home communication, one writer suggests that the terminology used by educators may widen the gap between parents and educators.[7] Another writer explains that poor parents may seem apathetic because of their failures in school and fear of the "educational establishment."[8]

The present writer was unable to locate any studies of attempts to increase the attendance and participation of low-income parents on Title I advisory councils. Several descriptive studies, however,

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[7]Claud E. Kitchens, Communication Between Home and School, Abstract for South Carolina Elementary School Principals Association (Columbia, South Carolina: n.d.), p. 13.

[8]Margaret M. Conant, "Learning Through Parents", Childhood Education, XLVIII (December, 1971), p. 117.

provide direction that one might take to improve parental involvement in the councils. The More Effective Schools Program employed parent-teacher workshops to successfully involve low-income parents in an early childhood education project.[9] A Title I program started home visitations and is now planning parent workshops.[10] Training sessions for council members can enable the parents to review remedial programs and make recommendations.[11]

Synthesizing needs expressed in the complaints of the parents who serve on Title I councils with the apparent success of parent workshops in increasing parental participation in specific Title I activities, the present writer proposes a method of improving parental involvement in Title I councils. A training session that would provide the parents with basic information about Title I and remedial programs and an opportunity to interact with school personnel in a neutral setting would be effective in increasing the attendance and participation of parents on Title I advisory councils.

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[9]Sylvia Newman, Guidelines to Parent-Teacher Cooperation in Early Childhood Education (Brooklyn: Book-Lab, 1971), pp. 7-8.

[10]Victoria K. Burney, "Home Visitation and Parent Involvement", Today's Education, LX (October, 1971), pp. 10-11.

[11]United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Parent Involvement, p. 10.

"SCHOOLS AND HOMES TOGETHER CAN DO MORE FOR CHILDREN

THAN EITHER CAN DO SEPARATELY."

- - - Arkansas SEA

Rationale of the Curriculm Design

The emphasis of the curriculm is to provide a setting where parents can assimilate the neccssary background information about Title I and related school programs. Of equal or even greater importance will be the processes of analysis, synthesis and problem solving. Activities that improve self-concept are also very important. Learning activities and settings will, therefore, be provided to involve the participants in comparing, analyzing and developing solutions to real problems.

Mission Statement of Curriculm

To increase the skills and self confidence of twenty to thirty parents who reside in "economically disadvantaged" school districts to the extent that they will become more active in seeking improvements in the Title I, ESEA and other compensatory education programs in their school and school district.

Solution Requirements:

(Note: the seven solution requirements are listed together; this is followed by the objectives for one solution requirement and the enabling activities for those objectives.)

A. To recruit at least twenty parents who have children in a Title I, ESEA, program and of which five will be on the Title I Council to participate in the training program in the selected school district(s).

B. To increase the understanding of the Title I, ESEA program in at least 90% of the workshop participants.

C. To increase the knowledge about promising educational practices for "disadvantaged" students in at least 80% of the workshop participants.

D. To increase the ability of 70% of the participants to evaluate their Title I programs.

E. To increase the ability of 70% of the participants to search for information and resources on their own.

F. To increase the ability of 70% of the participants of how to positively influence school administrators' decision making.

G. To increase the attendance of 90% of the participants in school meetings which affect Title I children.

Objectives for Solution Requirement A:

1. To invite all Title I Council members to attend the workshop through one phone call and one personal letter, three weeks prior to the first workshop session.

2. To publicize the workshops through at least four groups and organizations which involve low-income parents beginning three weeks before the first session.

3. To publicize the workshop through at least one local newspaper and radio station a week prior to the first session.

Activities for Objectives 1-3:

a. To obtain the list of Title I Council members five weeks prior to the first session.

b. To identify four groups and organizations which will help publicize the workshops among low-income and interested parents five weeks prior to the first session.

c. To prepare invitations for the Title I Council four weeks prior to the first session.

d. To prepare publicity materials for the four cooperating groups and organizations four weeks prior to the first session.

e. To prepare a press release for the radio station and local newspaper two weeks prior to the first session.

Objectives for Solution Requirement B:

(The workshop participants will attain these objectives by the end of the first 3-hour module and first followup activity.)

4. To develop an understanding of the original purpose of Title I, ESEA.

5. To understand the role that Title I parents legally should have in the planning, development, operation and evaluation of Title I projects.

6. To be aware of the programs that Title I funds in their school district.

7. To be aware of the goals of each Title I program in their school district.

Activities for Objective 4:

a. To listen and watch an audio-visual description of the Title I-ESEA program at the beginning of the first module.

b. To discuss any part of the description that is questioned by the participants after the audio-visual presentation.

c. To listen and watch a slide presentation which outlines the general educational and supportive services which can be funded under Title I, ESEA in South Carolina after activity 4b.

d. To discuss with the three facilitators after activity 4.c., the educational and supportive services that can be funded with Title I.

Activities for Objective 5:

a. To listen to one of the facilitators, after activity 4.d, present the five main points, using a poste of the Title I regulation which mandates parent involvement in the program.

b. To discuss after activity 5.a., one of the requirements in each of five groups.

c. To summarize after activity 5.b., the interpretations of the five main requirements as a total group.

Activities for Objectives 6-7:

a. To distribute after activity 5.c., a summary of their school district's Title I budget.

b. To review after activity 6.a., the Operational Budget Breakdown Page of their Title I Application using an opaque project.

c. To distribute after activity 6-7. b., the key Application pages which describe the goals of each Title I program in their district.

d. To discuss in small groups after activity 6-7.c., the goals of each of the Title I programs.

e. To summarize briefly in large group after activity 6-7.d, the main goal of each Title I program.

Followup Activity for Objectives 4-7:

To mail each participant four days after the first training session, a summary of the first session.

Objectives for Solution Requirement C:

(The workshop participants will attain these objectives by the end of the second 3-hour module and second followup activity.)

8. To be aware of Title I and other school programs that show promise in increasing math or reading achievement scores, or attendance of "disadvantaged" students.

9. To be able to discuss the positive and negative points of these promising programs as relates to the participants' value systems.

10. To be able to compare the current Title I program in the district to the promising programs.

Activities for Objectives 8-10:

a. To view and listen to, at the beginning of the second 3-hour session, an audio visual presentation of good early childhood program, and an examplary Title I math program.

b. To discuss in five small groups after activity 8-10. a., the positive and negative aspects of both programs.

c. To summarize as a total group after activity 8-10.b., the ten positive and ten negative aspects of each program.

d. To listen after activity 8-10.c., to a guest speaker describe a promising Title I reading program.

e. To discuss after activity 8-10.d., the merits of the reading program with the guest speaker.

f. To compare in five small groups after activity 8-10.e., the goals of the three model programs with the goals of their Title I reading, math, and early childhood program.

Followup Activity for Objectives 8-10:

To mail each participant four days after the second training session, a summary of the second session.

To organize a visit to a model or promising educational program.

Objectives for Solution Requirement D:

(The workshop participants will attain these objectives by the end of the third 3-hour module and third followup activity.)

11. To increase the ability to evaluate if the Title I programs are being implemented according to the designs in the Title I Project Application.

12. To increase the ability to evaluate the Title I programs to determine if they are meeting the needs of the Title I students.

13. To increase the ability of the parents to suggest ways and methods to improve the Title I programs.

Activities for Objective 11:

a. To review as a total group at the beginning of the third 3-hour session, the goals and activities of the district's Title I programs.

b. To evaluate in five small groups after activity 11.a., if the Title I project is being operated as it is designed in the Title I Project Application.

c. To summarize as a total group after activity 11.b., any discrepancies between the design and actual practices in the schools.

Activities for Objective 12:

a. To list ten needs of educationally disadvantaged children in three small groups with the aid of the facilitators after completing activity 11.c.

b. To compile as a total group after activity 12.a., a composite list of needs.

c. To arrange after activity 12.b., the list of needs in some priority order.

d. To review as a group after activity 12.c., the allowable uses of Title I funds and other school funds.

e. To evaluate in small groups, after activity 12.d., the current Title I programs as compared to their priority list of needs, model programs, and list of discrepancies.

Activities for Objective 13:

a. To view and listen after activity 12.e., to a presentation on video-tape about the changes that two rural school districts made in order to improve their educational activities for disadvantaged students.

b. To suggest in five small groups after activity 13.a., changes in the Title I programs that would improve the educational opportunities of Title I children.

c. To compile as a total group after activity 13.b., a composite list of improvements that should be initiated in the Title I programs (and perhaps regular school curriculm).

Followup Activity for Objectives 11-13:

To mail each participant four days after the third training session, a summary of the third session.

Objectives for Solution Requirement E:

(The workshop participants will attain these objectives by the end of the fourth 3-hour module and fourth followup activity.)

14. To become familiar with five local, state or national resources that the participants want to know about, in order to improve the Title I project.

15. To become familiar with five local, state, or national organizations which can assist parents with legal assistance or organizing information in order to solve problems with Title I and other related school issues.

16. To increase the knowledge of the participants of how to contact these resources when it is necessary.

Activities for Objective 14:

a. To determine after activity 13.c. in the third training module, what resources are or may be needed to assist them in promoting improved Title I programs.

b. To provide at the beginning of the fourth training module, a list of resources that the participants wanted to know about in activity 14.a.

Activities for Objective 15:

a. To provide after 14.b., a list of agencies which can offer legal and organizing assistance to solve Title I and related school problems.

b. To explain after activity 15.a., what these resource people and organizations will and will not do.

Activities for Objective 16:

a. To role play after activity 15.b., several situations that the parents might face and want to contact resource people or organizations for assistance.

b. To decide in small groups after activity 16.a., which resource person, if any, they might want to invite to their next session or go visit.

c. To decide in the same groups after activity 16.b., which person in the group will make the arrangements and when and how this will be accomplished.

Objectives for Solution Requirement F:

(The workshop participants will attain these objectives by the end of the fifth 3-hour module and fifth followup activity. Unlike the other Solution Requirments B-E, Requirement F depends heavily on the attainment of the majority of the objectives in all preceding modules.)

17. To understand the steps, including the time sequence, in planning, operating, and evaluating a Title I project.

18. To increase the knowledge to whom suggestions and complaints should be referred in the school district to get action.

19. To increase the ability of the participants to organize support for their ideas and suggestions.

Activities for Objective 17:

a. To view and listen after activity 16.c., to slide-tape presentation of the planning steps in the Title I program and when in a Fiscal year they occur.

b. To discuss in small groups after activity 17.a., what the different steps mean locally in planning a Title I program.

Activities for Objective 18:

a. To discuss in a total group after activity 17.b., who really wields the power in the district.

b. To discuss in small groups after activity 18.a., to whom a parent or parents should contact when (i) their child is having a problem in school, (ii) many children in a school are having a problem, (iii) children in several schools are having problems.

Activities for Objective 19:

a. To offer suggestions of how to solve a particular problem which might arise in discussions or question and answer periods during any enabling activity in all modules.

b. To involve interested participants in the preparation and mailing of the summaries after each module.

c. To involve all participants in a telephone pyramid to remind them of each training session and organize car pools to the sessions.

d. To role play in five small groups at the beginning of the fifth module, three problem situations with Title I in their district to determine what they could do as parents to begin to solve the problems.

e. To plan as a total group after activity 19.d., what, if anything, should be the content and activities in the sixth module, and what resources will be needed.

f. To build in all group activities during all modules, a unified effort in solving and discussing problems.

Followup Activity for Objectives 11-19:

To mail each participant four days after the fourth training session, a summary of the fourth session.

To mail each participant four days after the fifth training session, a summary of the fifth session.

Objectives for Solution Requirement G:

(The criteron of sucess will be that 90% of the participants will attend thirty percent more Title I Council, PTA/PTO meetings, or schod board meetings during the six month period after the attendance of at least four 3-hour training modules, as compared to the six month period before the training.)

20. To reduce the fear in the participants to attend school meetings.

21. To increase the awareness in the participants of the need to attend meetings that affect their children's education.

Activities for Objective 20.

Almost every activity that increases the participants' knowledge about Title I, educational programs, and their legal rights to involvement in Title I was designed with Objective 20 in mind. Two other activities will also assist in the attainment of this objective:

a. To discuss while role playing in activity 19.d., the reaction of the appropriate school official to their solutions.

b. To discuss the public information law in the sixth training module.

Several enabling activities which are listed under previously cited objectives are especially important: 8-10.e.; 13.a.; and 19.f.

Activities for Objective 21:

Almost every activity which demonstrates deficiencies in the current Title I program and which developes solutions to the deficiencies was designed with Objective 21 in mind. Two other activities will also assist in the attainment of this objedive:

a. To stress in any discussion or question and answer period the importance of taking problems and suggestions of solutions to the appropriate school officials.

b. To compile as a group in the sixth module, a list of all scheduled Title I Council meetings, PTA/PTO meetings, and school board meetings, including the times and places and who will be willing to transport parents to those meetings.

Several enabling activities which are listed under previously cited objectives are expecially important: 8.a.; 12.e.; 13.c.; 12.d. and 18.b.

Implementation

The training modules can be used in any school district where parents request them. As pointed out in the needs assessment, the need appears to be greatest in 15-20 majority-black school districts in South Carolina.

The training sessions will be divided into six modules of approximately three hours duration each. Modules 1-4 are not totally dependent on one another. Of course, each module will be more relevant if the participants in the workshop have been involved in the previous modules. Modules 5-6 can only be effective if the participants have shared in the experiences of at least two of the previous four modules. Important information and ideas are on video-tape or slides-tape in four of the modules. This will allow for a parent to miss a session but view and listen to part of the experience at some later, mutually agreed upon, time. This design is important for the rural poor because of their lack of transportation, babysitters, and fixed work schedules.

The number of modules that will be presented in any one day or week or month will depend on the participants. After the first module or a preliminary planning period, the parents will decide on the frequency of the training sessions. Because the workshop stresses the involvement of the participants, the number of modules that are employed may actually be more or less than six.

If the training sessions are to include both black and white parents, the site selection becomes very crucial. The site should be a location which is frequented by Blacks and Whites.

The modules will serve their purpose best especially in small group discussions, if three person act as facilitators. The selection of the facilitators will probably determine the success or failure of the training sessions. The improvement of the participants' self-confidence will depend on the facilitators' attitude toward poor parents and ability in developing a positive, cooperative atmosphere. Ideally the facilitators should be two low-income parents and an "educator." If the facilitators are not well informed about Title I and related issues, they should go through the six modules as the main part of their training.

The materials and handouts for the training modules can be prepared prior to the module for which they are required. If the facilitators need training, they can prepare these materials as they go through modules. The video-tapes and slide-tapes presentations should be completed prior to the use of any of the modules, so sufficient time can be allotted for their preparation.

In Figure 1 below, the objectives of the Solution Requirements B-G are listed in the training module were most of their enabling activities will be employed.

Figure 1

Module I	Module II	Module III	Module IV	Module V	Module VI
4	8	11	14	18	19
5	9	12	15	19	20
6	10	13	16	20	21
7	19	19	17	21	
20	20	20	18		
	21	21	19		
			20		
			21		

Evaluation

The evaluation of the training seesions will be difficult. An indepth paper and pencil test or an oral test of the information and concepts presented can not be used because of the possible negative effects (See page 2, footnote 4). Even if tests were used, they would not evaluate the effect of the training program in reaching the main goal, increasing the activity of the participants in seeking improvements in the Title I, ESEA program in their school district.

Two indirect measures of the factual information and concepts learned can be utilized in this setting. The first evaluation relies on the facilitators' observations. This can be used in assessing the percentage of participants who have attained each objective after being involved in the corresponding enabling activities.

After each training module the facilitator(s) can rate the success of the enabling activities in reaching the objectives in that module. An example of this is given below for Objective 4.

How many participants reacted as signified in the categories below to the enabling activies for Objective 4 in the first module?

learned a great deal	now have a notion of the concepts	learned a little	learned nothing new

This judgement was based on the participants:
__ discussions; __ questions; __ role playing; __ other ____

Suggest changes that would improve the enabling activities:

After each objective is evaluated under a solution requirement, an average can be calculated for the number of participants in each category for all the objectives under a solution requirement. The percent of participants in the first two categories can then be compared to the goal of the solution requirement.

A second less precise mdhod of evaluation can also be employed. Each participant in the last training module can fill out a simple form which attempts to measure their attainment of the goal of each solution requirement. Below is an example of a question which attempts to evaluate the attainment of Solution Requirement B.

> From the information given to you in the workshops, could you explain the Title I program to some one you don't know?
>
> (check one)
>
> Yes, very easily ___ Yes, but not completely ___ Maybe ___ No, not at all ___

The percent of participants who check the first two categories can be compared to the goal of the solution requirement.

An assessment of a change in the level of the participants' level of activity in seeking improvements in the Title I program, the main goal of the training sessions, is important. Arbitrarily, the writer would suggest a comparison of the participants' activity to change/improve the Title I programs or related programs in the six months period before the sessions began with the level of activity in the six months period. An estimate of the level of activity can be obtained for the preceding six months by including questions to that effect in the questionaire given to the participants in the last session. Below are listed six questions:

> In the last six months,
>
> how many times have you talked to your superintendent?___
> how many times have you talked to your Title I Coordinator?___
> how many times have you talked to your school board members?___
>
> how many Title I Council meetings have you attended?___
> how many school board meetings have you attended?___
> how many PTA/PTO meetings have you attended?____

Six months after the last training session, each participant in a group or individually should be asked the same questions by an interviewer. The data should be tabulated and statistically compared to the data from the participants' questionnaire.

Use of Evaluations

If two of the three evaluations indicate that the goals of the training sessions have been attained, the workshop modules will be used in the same format in the future. The three evaluations together can provide information of what needs to be changed in the the modules. After analyzing the data, certain enabling activities may have to eliminated, modified or amplified. This analysis may also indicate that certain objectives or perhaps solution requirements can not be attained in the time span of six 3-hour modules.

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